

An inspiring experience - Making mission possible - Mr. Gregory Corcoran speaks

An interesting educational programme is underway in the rural areas of Sri Lanka. A Canadian high school teacher has joined up with a local NGO called VanLanka, for a three month pilot project to assess and raise the English language skills amongst unemployed youth in Kurunegala.

VanLanka, the Chamber of Commerce, the Mayor and Council, the Ceylon Research Network are all partners in this ground breaking educational work. Mr. Gregory Corcoran, a high school teacher and ESL specialist is spearheading the pilot project amongst unemployed youth, Tamil slum areas and a few special interest classes for business and professional people in the community. Be part of their celebration seeing the pictures that communicates their interest and enthusiasm!!



It is most rewarding to see the pure joy and big smiles that this instruction generates amongst the youth. The fact that someone is interested in their wellbeing and helping them to shape a future, means everything to these innocent children. The classroom is very basic. A battered blackboard and some old wooden desks! These children have nothing but their hopes and dreams for a better tomorrow. Would you like to be part of their dream?

Vanlanka Community Foundation encourages Canadian teachers by fund raising to supplement the return ticket to Sri Lanka. All meals and accommodation are provided by a host family

arranged by the municipal council of Kurunegala. Mr. Corcoran reports that his host family is wonderful with three children and lovely amenities. Living with a family is ideal and he eats whatever traditional dishes are on the table. The children have learned to play some English card games, chess and even enjoy batting a tennis ball around on the neighborhood court. Mr. Corcoran states that he's very comfortable and overwhelmed by the warmth and hospitality of the many activists and educators that he's encountered so far. He says, 'classes are fun and interactive'. His typical week is about 25 hours of teaching and community work. This leaves him some time for sightseeing, visiting the wonderful beaches, coconut groves and ancient kingdoms that cover the island. With seven UNESCO World Heritage sites and a rich bio-diversity of flora and fauna, there is always some adventure in the works. Mr. Corcoran also notes that the food is heavenly!

This is a volunteer project that utilizes the skills of Canadian teachers and gives them a unique opportunity to see the countryside of this fabled paradise in the Indian Ocean. VanLanka is talking to various levels of government about expanding this valuable educational and humanitarian effort to other needy communities. If you're looking for a lifestyle change, a stint in the tropics and a great cultural exchange in a Buddhist society, this might be a good way to recharge your batteries and do meaningful work at the same time. It's a win-win! If this sort of experience sounds interesting to you and you would like to get more information, please contact VanLanka at 604 582-3974 and talk to the CEO, Sumana wijeratna and she will happily give you more information about future postings. See you in the tropics!

